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Kasper, Jan Klaassen, Pulcinella, Polichinelle and friends... go UNESCO!

Glove puppetry in Europe has a shared history. According to current research, it arrived in Central, Western and Southern Europe from Central Asia via Russia in the 13th century, and later also spread to Northern Europe. The defining element of glove puppetry in Europe was the comic figure, who defeated all his opponents, even death and the devil, and was in constant interaction with the audience. The comic figure developed different names and variations in appearance throughout Europe. But they had a common origin and still share comic principles in their performances.

To highlight this shared, living European cultural heritage, the comic figure of European glove puppetry and its performance principles are to be inscribed on UNESCO's list of intangible cultural heritage. This can only succeed with partners from across Europe. The puppet plays of *Jan Klaassen* in the Netherlands and *Kasper* in Germany are already recognised in both national cultural heritage registers. In other countries, this has not yet been achieved. With our initiative, we want to support national initiatives for the registration process and at the same time create a broad basis for a joint application by at least four European countries for UNESCO intangible cultural heritage status. We want to build a European network and invite puppeteers, theatre practitioners and researchers to join us!

The first step is to gain an overview: What comic characters are there in your country? Are they still actively played and interpreted or is it a dying tradition?

We kindly ask you to answer our questions until June 30th 2026, even if only in brief keywords.

Questionnaire

1) Theatre practice

- 1.1) What comic characters were and are there in your country?
- 1.2) What is the situation of puppeteers who still perform in the traditional style?
- 1.3) Do young puppeteers use comic characters and traditional performance styles?
Please name examples.

2) Research

- 2.1) Has the history of comic characters already been researched?
- 2.2) Are there any standard works of academic literature that are still relevant today?

3) Initiatives

- 3.1) Are there already initiatives to include this comic character in national registers of intangible cultural heritage, or to collaborate with UNESCO about intangible cultural heritage?

4) Contact person / Contact details

Please add your contact details to your answer and let us know if you would like to participate in a working group, if you are open to discussion or would rather only be kept in the loop.

Feel free to send your answers as pdf, word document, as part of an e-mail, as a letter or via the Google form – whichever suits you best.

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSf3AJVPH1RpwfWHHQbLePKjQtAYzpT-NBuMZlAsbqpqjU4q0g/viewform?usp=publish-editor>

For the evaluation, please keep the numeration of the questions visible in your answer.

Contact the Kasper goes UNESCO Working Group via:

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Thank you for your contribution,

The “Kasper goes UNESCO” Working Group

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